

TWO MINUTE SKETCHES

Christopher Columbus.

By J. A. EDGERTON.



He met rebuff after rebuff, but would not give up his dream.

FOR eighteen years Christopher Columbus cherished the dream of finding land to the west. This time was spent in ineffectual attempts to get money for the undertaking. Almost every sovereign of Europe was appealed to in vain. Poor, friendless, almost alone, regarded by many as insane, Columbus met rebuff after rebuff, but would not give up his dream. Finally he appealed to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. Ferdinand was not convinced, but Isabella was more favorably inclined and in the end went so far as to pawn her own jewels for the enterprise.

With the fitting out of his expedition the troubles of the great discoverer were not ended. When twenty days or more out in an unknown sea, his sailors began to murmur, urging him to turn back. At last the murmuring broke out into open mutiny. Still the bold navigator would not give up. Quelling the mutiny with whatever measures were necessary, he promised a reward to the first sailor who discovered land. At last the voyage was ended, and a goal greater than he himself knew was won.

In all history there are few more inspiring examples of faith than that of Columbus. He had only his own ideal to support him. Every one else doubted it. Nearly a score of years passed, in which every attempt to realize his dream met with failure. It is wonderful that doubt did not assail his own heart.

His was a faith, if not to remove mountains, at least to bring new worlds into view. So great were his troubles that they made him white-headed at thirty. They pursued him even to the end of his life. At one time he was thrown into prison. At nearly all times he was misunderstood. Saddest of all, he died without knowing that he had found two new continents and that his humble trip across the sea would open a new era in the history of mankind. It is wonderful that Columbus was of a genuinely religious nature, which may account for much of the trustful faith he had in his own inward prompting.

Sir Isaac Newton.

By J. A. EDGERTON.



A dull boy, he became the greatest mathematical genius of modern times.

IN this age of doubt many of our most cherished legends are being assailed, the various apple stories along with the rest. There have been at least three famous apples in history—the one eaten by Adam and Eve, the one shot off his son's head by William Tell and the one which fell suggested to Sir Isaac Newton the law of gravitation. Despite the scolding of the higher criticism, we still cherish these pippins and are determined to stand by them.

Newton was rather a dull boy and was literally kicked into exultation. He stood at the foot of his class and one day was booed by the boy higher up. The Newtonian spirit was aroused by this indignity, with the result that young Isaac not only whipped the kicker, but determined to go ahead of him in the class. This he did, and more, for he went to the head of the row and stayed there.

The second spur to effort received by the young man came at the time he sought admission to Cambridge university. He knew so little about Euclid that the professor of mathematics opposed admitting him. Newton thereupon determined to know Euclid and succeeded so well that he became the greatest mathematical genius of modern times.

Voltaire started the story of the apple that fell and hit Newton so hard that the young man determined to find out what made it fall. If so great a skeptic as Voltaire could swallow the story, there is no reason why it should not be accepted by the other skeptics. When Sir Isaac first made his computations on the subject of gravitation, he was misled by the erroneous notions then held of the length of the earth's radius. He therefore abandoned the theory temporarily. Later the error was corrected, when he returned to the subject, completed the demonstration and gave it to the world in his famous "Principia."

In the meantime he had made his almost equally famous discoveries concerning light, dividing white light into its primary colors and determining the difference of refraction between them. He also did much in perfecting the telescope, gave to mathematics integral and differential calculus and made other contributions to science which marked him as the chief intellect of his age.

What We Owe to Our Coal. "When England loses her ascendancy in coal production," said William Stanley Jevons, a British political economist, in 1867, "her fall will be quicker than the Roman empire's was after Odoacer, the Germanic barbarian, upset the shadow throne of the little Augustus and made himself king of Italy." The United States, which was low in the scale of coal production when that prophecy was made, has since then passed far ahead of England. Of the more than 400,000,000 tons of coal of all sorts produced in the United States in the calendar year 1907 much more than three-fifths was anthracite, and nearly all of this was furnished by Pennsylvania.

In 1880 the United States passed ahead of the United Kingdom in volume of manufactures in the aggregate, and the lead has been increasing ever since. In 1907 the United States in pig iron production, 26,000,000 tons, beat the United Kingdom, Germany and France combined. In 1908 our \$220,000,000 of worth exceeds that of the United Kingdom and France taken together, which are our nearest rivals on that roll. Much of the United States' industrial and financial preponderance over the countries of the world is due to the utilization of anthracite, which started on Feb. 11, 1808—Lee's Weekly.

A FRANK CRITIC.

She Contrasts the Opera With a Cantata at Home.

It was Rufus Choate, who was not musical, who once at the opera gazed helplessly at his libretto and, turning to his daughter, who was musical, said: "Helen, expound to me this record, lest I dilate with the wrong emotion." Mrs. Rims of Dulverton, who is also unmusical, recently attended the opera with her daughter and felt that her emotions there were hardly satisfactory.

"Yes," she told her friends on returning to the village, "Louise took me to the opera, and it certainly was a sight. It was real interesting looking round before it began, and I enjoyed it some afterwards, too; really I did. There were so many folks in it and such a lot of going and coming and marching and grouping it made quite a picture."

"And the music, too—some of it had quite a swing to it, most as good as a parade. But it went on and on and on, and I began to get pretty tired of it, and it kept on and on, and I got tired and tired."

"You see, 'twasn't like a cantata at home, where you know the folks. That's different. It don't matter then how long the story strikes out, and 'showing any kind of story does string it out ridiculous; but, knowing the folks, there's always something interesting you can turn your mind to and forget it."

"Now, when the Choral club gave 'King Rains's Daughter' there was all their clothes to look at first off. And, you know, there were some clever makeovers amongst 'em too. You remember, Selina Meade's dress for the princess she got out of that old stained wedding gown of Great-grandmother Barclay's? If that wasn't a job to be proud of I don't know what is!"

"And Sam Giddings' trousers—well, they weren't trousers exactly, but those things he wore on his legs—Sam felt he oughtn't to hire, and Jane Giddings made 'em herself! How she ever did it! I'd as soon try cutting out a suit of court clothes for the emperor of China myself."

"Then I always did find it entertaining to watch out for Lenny Barker's gold front tooth to flash when he opens wide on a top note, and—oh, well, you know how 'tis. There's always something."

"But at the opera there ain't, and by the end of an hour of bang and tootle and tum-tum and tra-la-I'd had all I wanted, and but for hurting Louisa's feelings I'd 'a' left. She says 'twas grand, and I dare say 'twas, but give me the town hall and home talent every time."—Youth's Companion.

BIRD VISION.

Keen Eyesight of the Kingfishers and Water Birds.

So far I have determined that the keenest eyesight is probably possessed by water birds and kingfishers, although even they are not as keen as the eyesight of man is. It is a fact that the eyesight of man is going to get worse in the future and is getting worse all the time—that is, we are growing more nearsighted. The occupations of a majority of men in cities compel them to do their work at very close range. This removes the necessity of the farsighted eyes with which most men are endowed. It is probably a good thing that we are becoming nearsighted.

As an example of the visual capacity of some birds one has to think for a moment of a hawk poised several hundred yards above a meadow in which a field mouse or a small chicken is hidden. In a few seconds after the quarry is sighted it is seized by the bird, whose sharp sight has not only detected it, but whose wonderful accommodative apparatus permits of a sure and continuous fixation from hundreds of meters to less than a meter within an incredibly short space of time. Variations in the character of this acute vision are seen in many other birds—in the humming bird, that darts here and there so quickly that the human eye cannot follow it and yet comes suddenly to rest on an almost invisible twig; in the woodcock, that flits through the dark woods, avoiding every tree, shrub and branch as if they were nonexistent; in the owl, that combines good diurnal with good nocturnal vision, and in the kingfisher, that sees as well in the air as he does in water.—Dr. C. A. Wood in Chicago Inter Ocean.

Paris Ever Famous.

Paris was a famous and cultivated city ages before Venice. If we search for them we may find it in historical associations that may vie with those of any city in the world except Rome and Constantinople, and even its antiquarian and artistic remains are seldom equaled or surpassed. At Rome, Florence or Venice the tourist talks of old churches, palaces and remains. At Paris he gives himself up to the boulevards, the theaters, shops and races. The profoundly instructive history, the profuse antiquarian remains of the great city, are forgotten carent quia vate sacro.—London Spectator.

More Oratory Wanted.

The remark made on a prolix Scotch counsel when some one observed that he was "surely wasting a great deal of time" is among the wisest of his anecdotes: "Time! He has long exhausted time and has encroached upon eternity!"

It is seldom, to do the judges justice, that they encourage this failing in counsel. But in Cockburn's memoirs we are told how an observation of Lord Meadowbank, who thought his style undignified: "Decline, sir. Why don't you declaim? Speak to me as if I were a popular assembly."—St. James' Gazette.

Why the Band Left.

First Actor—I hear that the orchestra in your theater was sacked in a body the other night. What was the matter?

Second Actor—Why, they spoiled the best action in the play. You know the court scene, where the hero is sentenced to death?

"Well, they were told to play something appropriate, and the judge had no sooner put on the black cap than the idiots struck up 'Where Did You Get That Hat?'—London Scraps.

A Sharp Thrust.

"You're trying very hard to be a man, it seems," said the disgusted husband the other day to his wife.

"Well," she replied coldly, "don't you think we need one in the family?"—New York Tribune.

A pound of care will not pay an ounce of debt.—Danish Proverb.

WONDERS OF COAL.

"Buried Sunshine" Has Become a Plaything of Science.

Has it ever occurred to you that the vanilla which many a favorite dish of yours is flavored is made from coal? Will you believe that most of the dyes which have stained the fabrics of your clothes, that the naphtha and benzine which your tailor uses in removing stains and that even the sweetest perfumes are all of them derivatives of coal.

It was once said by a scientist, clever and more imaginative than most of his kind, that coal is "buried sunshine." Something of the enormous extent of ancient coal forming jungles may be conceived when it is said that our present forests would produce only two or three inches of coal if they, too, were subjected to a carbonizing process.

The magicians who have wrought wonders with coal are the gasmaker and the chemist. If coal is burned in the open air, but a little ash, and nothing left, but a little ash. Burn it in a closed vessel, however, and the marvelous change occurs. In the first place, coal gas is produced, and, chemically treated, is supplied to every city home. Furthermore, ammonia is obtained, important in modern agriculture because by its means plants can be artificially supplied with the nitrogen they need. Then, again, asphalt is produced, much used in roadmaking, although the retort is not the chief source of its supply. Lastly, a black, sooty ooze is collected which goes by the name of "coal tar." It is this which at the touch of the modern chemist's wand is transformed into the most widely different substances imaginable.

The wonders of coal tar do not cease here. It is a palette of gorgeous colors, a medicine chest of potent drugs, a whole arsenal of terrible explosives, a vial of delicious flavors and a garden of perfumes—the most potent, varied substance in the world.—London Pall Mall Magazine.

THE HAT HABIT.

A Custom That is Neither Becoming Nor Health Giving.

Why do both men and women persist in wearing hats? asks Pearson's Magazine. There are three reasons why they should wear clothes. We may wear them for the sake of decency, for the sake of warmth and for the sake of display. None of these reasons applies to the wearing of hats. Of course there are head coverings that are warm, such as the Icelanders' sealskin hood and the fisherman's tow; but, as a rule, there is no real warmth in the hat of either sex. When a woman puts a slight structure of straw and artificial flowers on the top of her head, she never for an instant imagines that the thing will keep her from taking cold. The masculine top hat is certainly warm on a hot day, but it is very far from warm in cold weather.

Neither are hats worn for the purpose of display. Doubtless there are times when women make the hat the occasion of displaying their fondness for dead birds, muslin flowers and other beautiful objects, but this is only when fashion has decreed that big hats shall be worn. At other times the hat is so ridiculously small that it could not be successfully used for displaying anything. As for men's hats, they never display anything except the atrocious taste which makes them fashionable. Why, then, in the name of all that is sensible, do men and women wear hats?

As a rule, every man and every woman looks better without a hat than with one. This is why we all take off our hats at the opera or at an evening party, and yet we cling to it as if it were a word to be said in its behalf. It is so ridiculously small that it could not be successfully used for displaying anything. As for men's hats, they never display anything except the atrocious taste which makes them fashionable. Why, then, in the name of all that is sensible, do men and women wear hats?

Up to the age of sixteen Dick retained the proper respect for things feminine; then he went to dancing school and fell smitten by the charms of several youthful Evils. Accordingly Dick approached his father and requested theater tickets for two.

Father complied and merely asked as he turned over the seats, "Which girl is it?"

"I'm going to take Mabel," responded Dick.

"Then she's the one you like best?" father continued.

Dick turned a superior and pitying eye upon his parent. "Oh, no; I don't like her best! You don't understand the situation, father. It isn't the girl I care about. It's the experience I want."—New York Times.

Poor William!

"William my son," said an economical mother to her boy, "for mercy's sake, don't keep on tramping up and down the floor in that manner. You'll wear out your new boots." (He sits down.) "There you go sitting down! Now you'll wear out your new trousers. I declare, I never saw such a boy!"—London Tit-Bits.

Odd Roman Custom.

In northern Germany a familiar figure of the rural districts is a quaint old gentleman whose hat is very much decorated with flowers and particular ribbons and who carries a staff to the top of which is tied a huge bunch of real or artificial flowers knotted to it by long streamers of shilshil ribbons. According to the district, his costume also is old fashioned and quaint. He is the "hochzeitsbitter" or person employed among the country folk to go from house to house and invite guests to attend a wedding. He delivers himself of a set speech in an old "Platt Deutsch" rhyme when he arrives at each place, accompanying it with wagging of the head and stamping of the staff, and is generally in rather a jovial condition by the time his day's labor is ended.

Milton's Retort.

John Milton was not a wit, yet he is reported to have made a crushing reply to a question from Charles II. "Do you not think," said the king, "that your blindness is a judgment on you for having written in justification of my father's murder?"

"Sir," replied the poet, "if it is true I have lost my eyesight, but if all the calamitous providences are to be regarded as divine judgments your majesty should remember that your father lost his sight."

All That Didn't Sink.

"I suppose you have considerable floating population here?" inquired the visitor.

"Yes," replied the native of the little river town, "specially durin' the rainy season."—Puck.

CHINESE WRITING.

Every Scrap of Every Kind Is Held to Be Sacred.

The Chinese hold every scrap of writing sacred, no matter what the characters express—the merest commercial message, advertisement, etc. Since Confucius used these characters to teach his wisdom they are holy.

In the average Chinese community all letters and waste papers are laid away in a clean receptacle to await the collector, who appears at regular intervals to transfer the waste papers to the sacred furnace. If the papers were burned by the Chinese in their own homes, the ashes of the sacred writings would mingle with the ashes of wood and other fuel, and the ashes of Chinese writing are as sacred as the writing itself.

The ashes from the sacred furnace are placed in sacks, the sacks are conveyed by wagons to the sea and there, in a Mon War boat, are carried out where the tide runs swift and consigned to the waves.

The Mon War boat belongs to the Mon War Shier, which is a lodge with branches everywhere, organized and maintained for the purpose of paying reverence to the spirit of Confucius.

The furnace in the Chinatown which nearly every large city in the United States harbors is generally a little, oval-like structure about five feet high. Opposite it on the wall there will usually be an inscription of the character of the following: "The spirits of our ancestors are pleased that we keep sacred the writing of our country."

A MERCHANT.

He Used to Be One Engaged Exclusively in Foreign Commerce.

Originally the term merchant was applied only to one who traded with foreign countries and who owned or chartered ships for that purpose—Chaucer's "Marchant."

He would the sea were kept for any thing.

Between Middleburgh and Orwelle. The merchant of Venice had "on the ocean" his "argosies with portly sail," and so had all the other merchants about whom poets or historians have written. So also in the Bible there is no confusion about the meaning of the word. One passage alone will serve as an illustration, "She is like the merchants' ships—she bringeth her food from afar" (Proverbs xxxi, 14). De Quincy, writing in the early part of the nineteenth century ("Autobiographical Sketches"), says:

"My father was a merchant, not in the sense of Scotland, where it means a retail dealer—one, for instance, who sells groceries in the cellar—but in the English sense, a sense rigorously exclusive—that is, he was a man engaged in foreign commerce and no other, therefore in wholesale commerce and no other."

But now it is no longer necessary to "plow the Spanish main" to give one this time honored title, for any one who sells eggs by the dozen or hannel by the piece is at once put down as a merchant.—London Notes and Queries.

Webster's Home Squadron.

A few days before his death Daniel Webster wished to leave his sickroom once more to look upon the little paradise which his taste had adorned about his mansion. Dressing himself with the utmost care, he went through the house on the arm of a servant and finally reached the library. The night before there was a terrific storm, and the great statesman expressed solicitude for the safety of the fishermen. We set his eye fell upon a number of pleasure boats which had been moored to a little mound in the artificial pond in the rear of the house. "Well," said he, "the home squadron is safe. I think I will go back." It was his last playful remark. He never left his room again.

Sensitive Plants.

There are plants so sensitive that if when standing by them you should suddenly put up your umbrella or sunshade it would be quite sufficient to cause them instantly to close together their leaflets and turn down their leaf stalks, just as if they were alarmed by the movement. Indeed, on a sunny day when the temperature is sufficiently high you need not make even so decided a movement; merely your shadow coming in contact with their leaves will often cause them to fall slightly.—Strand Magazine.

Dignity.

I ought not to allow any man because he has broad lands to feel that he is rich in my presence. I ought to make him feel that I can do without his riches, that I cannot be bought—neither by comfort, neither by pride—and, although I be a wretched peasant and receiving bread from him, that he is the poor man beside me.—Emerson.

Seeing the Alps.

"Did you see the Alps?" "Oh, yes. Our car broke down right opposite them, and, do you know, I'm almost glad it did. I found them so charming and interesting."—Exchange.

Clear, but Confusing.

She—Oh, don't go there on Saturday. It's so frightfully crowded. Nobody goes there then.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

Some People Think That They are Fond of Literature.

Just because they like to read novels.—Boston Globe.

The Twins.

"Two Mormon boys went to school for the first time on Utah," relates Congressman J. Adam Beale, and the teacher asked them their names.

"John and William Smith," the boys replied.

"Ah, then you are brothers! How old are you?"

"Each ten years old, ma'am."

"Indeed! Then you are twins?"

"Please, ma'am," replied one of the boys, "only on our father's side."

His Bright Idea.

Not many years ago a well known dealer was visited by a would be seller who had in his hand an envelope containing seven signatures of Sam'l Pags, which, he said, he had just cut off the original letters to save trouble. By so doing he had diminished the value of his property by nearly \$200.—London Opinion.

ARE YOU GOOD AT FIGURES?

If You Solve This Problem You Will Win a \$25,000 Prize.

In 1655 there died in Toulouse a French lawyer, Pierre de Fermat, who made a hobby of mathematics and enriched the treasures of that science by several most interesting formulas. Unfortunately he had the habit of announcing his discoveries without any mention of the means by which he arrived thereat or affording any special proof or method of proof. He simply inscribed them in the margin of his favorite copy of the "Arithmetica" of Diophantus of Alexandria. When in 1670 his son issued a new edition of Diophantus he printed his father's marginal notes along therewith. As almost every one of these notes was new and had for pure mathematics some meaning and value, they have afforded for many years material for much study, discussion and proof. It was a long while before their demonstration was in any way complete, and there remains to this day one which is known to mathematicians simply as the Fermat formula or rule and which has not yet been proved mathematically. This formula or rule is to the effect that, while the sum of two squares of whole numbers may (not must) amount to the square of another whole number—as, for instance, $6^2 + 8^2 = 36 + 64 = 100 = 10^2$ —the sum of two cubes can never be the cube of a whole number, the sum of the fourth powers of two numbers can never be the fourth power of a whole number, etc.

To prove a negative is, as a rule, more difficult than to demonstrate a positive. In fact, it is the burden of proof rests always on the one asserting the positive side of the question. Here the fact remains: Fermat's assertion that the sums of higher powers than squares can never amount to a corresponding higher power of a whole number appears to be invariable, but no mathematical demonstration thereof has as yet been offered.

In order to stimulate mathematical discussion and demonstration Dr. Paul Wolfskehl, who died recently in Darmstadt, left in his will a provision for the payment of 100,000 marks (\$25,000) to the first person who would afford the mathematical proof of the Fermat formula for all quantities. The Göttinger Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften has the consideration of solutions offered and the awarding of the prize to the successful applicant. Such celebrated mathematicians as Euler, Dirichlet and Kummer have given proofs which cover a number of special cases, but no one has as yet shown that the rule is absolute for all whole numbers.—Scientific American.

"Son of the Czar, Fear the Red!"

The czar has issued an order that several state buildings in St. Petersburg which had been painted red since the time of Nicholas I. must be repainted some other color. The fact is he dislikes the color red. Neither his wife, his daughters, the little grand duchesses nor the ladies of the court ever wear red in the czar's presence. His abhorrence of the color is not due altogether to its associations with anarchy and rebellion. When he was quite a boy he was with his parents at Livadia. While walking with some companions one afternoon Nicholas came upon an old gypsy woman who was telling fortunes. There was always a strain of the mystic in Czar Nicholas. He insisted that the woman should "read" his hand. Long she gazed at his palm and studied its lines; then, supposedly ignorant of his identity, she said, "Son of the czar, fear the red!" The incident deeply impressed him. He described it to his father and mother, who only laughed at him. But the impression remained in his mind and gradually has grown stronger. The czar's fear of red has been increased by the events of recent years and by the knowledge that it is the color of the revolutionists.—London P. T. O.

Practicing For the Cotton.

"Nobody ever told me that I was a good dancer," declared Edward M. Greenway, leader of cottons, "but I'll tell you a compliment a young woman did pay me once. She said, 'You took me through that crowd without a collision and without any one treading on my skirt.'"

"Well, I never had a dancing lesson in my life, but I used to practice dancing in the days when women wore those great long trains and it was not considered good form to pick them up. These trains led behind for several paces. Those were the days when you had to guide and keep moving with your partner so as to keep that train following gracefully."

"But how did you practice?"

"Used to tie two sheets to an ordinary chair and then dance in and out among a dozen chairs scattered over a dance floor."—San Francisco Chronicle.

King Carlos.

He was the most versatile king in the world. He was a glutton and ate more than any man in his kingdom. He weighed 350 pounds. He was a champion swimmer. He had great personal courage. He once risked his life to save a drowning man and to rescue a peasant from a highwayman.

He was a skillful and bold banderillero in the bull ring.

He was a good story teller, a fine whip, a yachtsman, a painter of note and sculptor, tennis player and musician.

He had translated Shakespeare into Portuguese.

He was the best pistol shot in Europe.

He spoke seven languages.

He pawned his crown, worth \$6,000,000.—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Extravagance.

There is a clerk in the employ of a Philadelphia business man who, while a fair worker, is yet an extravagant of pronounced eccentricity. One day a wife handed him off the top of the clerk's desk and scratched his cheek. Not having any court plaster at hand, he slapped on three two-cent stamps and continued his work. A few minutes later he had occasion to take some paper to his employer's private office. When he entered, the "old man," observing the postage stamps on his cheek, fixed him with an astonished stare. "Look here, Jenkins," he exclaimed, "you are carrying too much postage for second class matter!"

He Was Right.

"Johnny," said the big brother of an "Johnny" small boy, "go to the shoemaker's and see if my shoes are mended, will you?"

"New," said the urchin.

"Why not?"

"Cause they ain't done yet."

"How do you know?"

"Cause I ain't taken 'em yet, that's how."

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